

Dr Richard Harris SC OAM & Dr Craig Challen SC OAM

Australians of the Year 2019, Thai Cave Rescue Divers and Keynote Speakers

Dr Richard “Harry” Harris and Dr Craig Challen were the two Australian cave divers who were instrumental to the rescue of 12 soccer players and their coach from a cave in Thailand in July 2018. Their efforts were recognised in 2019 when they were each named as Australian of the Year.



Members of the Wet Mules, a diving group that takes on some of the world’s deepest caves, both men risked their lives to navigate the narrow cave system amidst rising water levels to save the boys.

Now in high demand as keynote speakers, Richard and Craig tell their riveting story about the successful international rescue effort, tailoring their presentations for each audience. Richard and Craig are also available for question and answer sessions.

More about Dr Richard Harris:

Richard Harris’s career in anaesthesia and aeromedical retrieval medicine has enabled him to combine his expertise in diving, wilderness and remote area health. His love of underwater exploration has led him to work on National Geographic documentaries, feature films and with various teams worldwide in the role of diver, underwater cameraman and of course medical support. A member of the Explorers Club of New York, in 2015 he was recognised with an Australian award for Outstanding Contributions to Cave Exploration and in 2017, he was awarded The Australasian Technical Diver of the Year.

Richard has a professional and voluntary interest in search and rescue operations. He established the first sump rescue training course in Australasia, and has built relationships with emergency services locally. The 2018 Thailand Cave Rescue was an opportunity to put his training and expertise to work.

Drawing on his medical expertise as a member of the Thai cave rescue team, Richard medically assessed and administered anaesthetic to each of the evacuees to facilitate their rescue. His efforts were recognised when he was named South Australia’s Australian of the Year in 2019 and



later Australian of the Year 2019.

More about Dr Craig Challen:

A retired vet and CEO, and a keen aviator, Craig was about to go on a caving holiday in the Nullarbor Plains, when he was called to help the rescue mission based on his technical expertise. Although he initially thought the rescue would be too difficult to accomplish, he played a leading role in the successful mission. Working 10 to 12 hours a day in extremely dangerous conditions, he repeatedly risked his life as the children were swum, one by one, through the dark and narrow flooded caves. Craig was awarded the Star of Courage for his unwavering and selfless bravery. In 2019 he was recognised as Australia of the Year for Western Australia, and later Australian of the Year 2019.

Client testimonials

“ Harry and Craig were absolutely sensational speakers, during their presentation, you could have heard a pin drop in a room with over 430 guests. They were giving of their time with our audience and were extremely low maintenance.

- *Storyfest*

“ Dr Richard Harris was a sheer delight to work with. He went over and above to customise his presentation to our audience which certainly did not go unnoticed. The feedback for his session was amazing with phrases such as “humble hero” and “true Australian legend” and being used freely. There was not a dry eye in the house.

- *eBusiness Media*

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